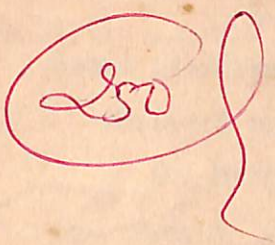
Some problems of Bauddha Gāna— a right solution



Dr. B. N. Pandit, Srinagar
Ph. D. in Kashmir Saivism
M. A. M. O. L

—Dr. J. D. Sinha

Dr. B. N. Pandit Shastri
M. A. M. O. L.
Ph. D. in Kashmir Saivism

Some problems of Bauddha-Gana—a right solution

Dr. Jaydhari Sinha

Bauddha Gana or Charya-Geeti is the finest specimen of the Post-Harshavardhan Apabhramsha literature which is claimed to be an invaluable asset of three major languages of North India, viz. Bengali, Maithili and Hindi, by scholars learned in these languages. It dates back to a period lying between the middle of the 8th.century and the second quarter of the eleventh century and is composed by different Siddhas like Sarahapa, Shabarapa, Luipa and others. Fifty such songs, written by twenty three Siddhas, were published under the caption of 'Bauddha Gana' by M. M. Haraprasad Shastri or of Charya-Geetikosha by Dr. P. C. Bagchi or of Charya-Geeti-Padavali by Dr. Sukumar Sen and other modern scholars. Besides, we find songs of Vinayshree published by Late Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan.

Several translations are available in Tibetan, in English and in Bengali. Besides, there are treatises dealing with the philosophical or religious aspects of these Charya-Geetis and Dohas of Siddhas who believed to have been followers of Vajrayana school, the later form of Mahayanic Buddhism. But inspite of all these translations and treatises the basic problem of obscurity still remains unresolved.

The Charya-Songs contain symbolic expressions like Harinee, Harina, Balad etc. etc., which represent particular mystic ideas, intended by the Siddha-poets. What is really represented by a particular symbol is generally very difficult to understand. Naturally, a reader has to consult the only available Samskrit commentary by Munidatta or some translations based thereon. But that commentary itself makes it worse confounded as it generally abounds in technical terms that beg of a very detailed treatment. And without having a detailed knowledge of the terms used therein it is impossible to have a clear understanding of things expounded by the commentator. In other words, the commentary in itself does not serve the purpose of helping a modern reader to follow the drift or the ideas contained in a particular Charya-Song.

A few instances would presently show that the commentary is at most places conspicuously verbose. Even a line containing very simple ideas is explained in terms of high-sounding technical words like Bodhichitta, Viramanand, Sahajanand and others. Let us take for instance the line of Luipada—'लुइ भणइ गुरु पुच्छिअ जाण'—Lui says, have a knowledge (of such truths) from Guru after consulting him. But Munidatta has explained it in following words—

तस्मिन् कुलिशारविन्दसंयोगाक्षरसुखोपायं श्रीगुरून् पृष्ट्वा विरमानन्दे व्याप्यव्यापकतया सर्वधर्मानुपलम्भरूपं सहजानन्दमहासुखं अहर्निशं जानीहि।

The context of the line, no doubt, requires an introduction of the sense of Mahasukha—'दिढ़ करिअ महासुह परिमाण'. But as the song starts with a reference to Chanchal Chitta or a fickle Mind, it was rather more imperative of the commentator to explain the line with reference to a stress on Vikalpakshaya or annihilation of illusory tendencies; for 'सुखदुखेते निचित मरिअइ'—feelings of pleasure and pain must lead you to destruction. So the portion of the commentary cited above clearly shows that it is not only verbose but is also redundant or even irrelevent as the line explained does not intend to confine a Balayogin to

a particular way . The poet is quite conscious of risks a disciple has to undergo if he lacks a sense of direction . This sense can be developed only through a disciplined practice of spiritual contemplation and this practical aspect of Sadhana cannot be understood without the guidance of an experienced man willing to teach , which only a Guru can do . This sense of the line is left untouched by the commentator . So the above instance is sufficient to illustrate that he was so much preoccupied with a particular set of ideas that he could not maintain clarity or precision and do justice to the text , he was going to illuminate . And this tendency of the commentator to read into the text the set of his own ideas is naturaliy responsible for the obscurity ; for, as has been said above, a modern reader has to take the commentary as an aid to his study of the songs and if that aid in its turn could not make clear the ideas of the text but introduced altogether new ideas into them , the consequence is bound to be dubious and disappointing .

Let us go a little deeper into the commentary and it would be clear that the sense of the text has been distorted in may cases to suit the commentator's own preconceived ideas . For instance , let us take the poems

of Dhamapada . There is one line—'समता जोएँ जलिल चण्डाली–Chandalee was burning through Samata-Yoga , the Yoga of identification . What is this Chandalee ?

Munidatta explained it to be Parishuddhava-dhootee . Bauddha Tantrik texts define Avadhootee as the central nerve passing through the spinal cord . M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj , who is well-known for his erudition and grasp over all the branches of Tantrik religion , has very rightly asserted that that is nothing but a Nadee and the word Parishuddha simply refers to the state of purity of this Nadee attained through Yogic practices . Munidatta has himself admitted it into the context of some other songs . But so far as the explanation of the above line is concerned , he has misinterpreted the truth by identifying the Nadee with the Supreme Power , Chandalee and the question of a correct identity of Chandalee remained unsolved . And the line under study was left unex-plained .

Let us take another instance . There is one line from the song of Shabarapada—'सून नैरामणि कण्ठे लइआ महासुहे राति पोहाइ'—the night passed in

Mahasukha with Nairamani (Nairatma) embraced in neck . The commentator explains 'Kanthe laia' as seating the Devi in the Sambhoga-chakra . The interpretation applies well to the context of esoteric practice (Chakrabhedayoga) . But the erotic aspect of 'Mahamudra-sadhana' is left untouched in the commentary, as all the interpretations conform to Antarang Shakti-Sadhana or the practice of raising the Power of the Jeeva to the state of Eternal Bliss through an identification with Chandalee in the words of a Bauddha Yogin. And it is quite natural, for even a scholar conversant with Bauddha Tantras or even with Iconography is misled by the above one-sided explanation of a line , so splendidly beautiful for the figure of ambiguity or Shleshalankar . The explanation makes him sceptic as regards the sanction of Mudrasadhana or Shaktisadhana , a very important aspect of even the Buddhist way of Tantrik practice . He misses the charm of such a delightful line of Shabarapada and is subject to further confusions, which become responsible for the obscurity of the Charya-Song .

To conclude the account of his erroneous or biased stands let us see how Munidatta ignored even the historical or biographical truths. It is clear from his refere-

nce that Dhampada believed in Nirmanachakra seated in the naval region . Dhamapada was the disciple of Jalandharapada , who was a follower of the Hevajra School of Tantra , which defines Nirmanachakra in the Yoni-region of the body . This Yoni-region is 'Gudame-dhrantaram' , which applies even to Mooladhar. That means , Jalandharapada believed in the lowest Chakra being seated in the Mooladhar-region and it would not be wrong to infer that Dhamapada, his disciple, believed the same truth . So it is quite clear that Munidatta ignored the very basic truth , the truth about the experience of the poet who wrote the line under commentary. How he ignored the concept of Nairatma lying in an eternal embrace with Bodhisattva is clear form the omission of such an erotic experience in the commentary of the song of Shabarapa, as shown above . How he did not care to take Chandalee as the Supreme Kinetic Power passing through the Avadhooti-nerve is clear from the interpretation of the song of Dhamapada , as shown above. And all these together go to prove that the commentary is full of historical, iconographic or even textual errors, which are responsible for the charge of obscurity , levelled against Siddha-literature, a very excellent work of the Pala-period .

The basic defect with Munidatta seems to me that he was an exponent of the so-called Buddhist Tantras and as it happens with all specialists , he tried his best to read into the lines of the Siddhas the complete philosophy of the Buddhist esoteric Sadhana , as he understood it.

The Siddhas were practical Yogins following a line of Sadhanas irrespective of the fact whether that line was the line of Sadhana expounded in Buddhist esoteric literature or on the line expounded in what we call the Shaiva-Shakta Tantrika literature .

To me it appears clear that all the ideas contained in the Charya-Songs can be explained on the line which I have found expounded in the Shaiva-Shakta Tantrika literature e. g. in Kularnava-Tantram, Vishwasaratantram and Kubjika-Tantram . In most cases these geetis can be explained on the lines of Buddhist Tantras also . But in this respect I have to submit with apology to all great scholars of Buddhist Tantras that many of the basic assumptions of the Buddhist Tantra have been the same except in name as in Shaiva-Shakta Tantras.The same ideas are expressed, expounded or detailed in Buddhist Tantras in an esoteric way, in a rather symbolic manner ,

which requires a general perception of the whole system before it can be intelligible to an uninitiate . In the Shaiva-Shakta Tantra on the other hand the very same ideas are expounded , described or even mentioned much more clearly, directly and unambiguously without any of the technical jargons so that even a beginner can understand it . But to grasp it the help of a teacher is , no doubt, necessary.

It is quite a different problem how far the two Tantras agree though not in name and how far the one is different from the other . It is not, therefore, possible just at present to say categorically if the one is an adaptation of or an advance on the other . I have only found that many of the ideas in these Geetis are the same as expounded in Shaiva-Shakta Tantras, though the Siddhas have mentioned them in different terms . In fact there were only two terms in the whole of these geetis which presented some difficulty to me in identifying them and they were Bohi (Bodhi) and Karuna . Otherwise all these ideas have been expounded more clearly, directly, unambiguously without any esoteric symbolism in almost all Tantras of Shaiva-Shakta School, though the terms under which these Siddhas referred to them are

strange to the nomenclature of the Shaiva or Shakta Tantras. It may be that these terms are symbolic and the Siddhas used them when they were expounding the esoteric Sadhana of their own.

Munidatta, however, has attemped to explain all the ideas in these geetis rigidly on the principles of his own particular School and to suit them he has brought in many things quite irrelevent to the songs which naturally makes the confusion worse confounded. This is the reason why all translations and treatises (all of them being based on the commentary of Munidatta) have failed so far to make simpler these beautiful songs of the Siddhas, so obscure. Unless we accept that these Siddhas were not rigid philosophers but only devout Sadhakas, we shall not be able to understand what they have sung in ecstasy.

Therefore the Samskrit commentary by Munidatta is not reliable as a proper key to the Charya-literature. Let us start afresh and look at the problem from the very first principles. And those first principles as obtained in the songs can be classified into (1) Vikalpakshaya (2) Shaktisadhana—(a) Mahamudrasadhana and (b) Antaranga-Shaktisadhan and then finally (3)Paramartha-Jnana. And, as I have just emphasized, it would not be

at all irrelevant to consult the texts of the Shaiva-Shakta Tantras in this connection and find out the clear exposition of truths and processes concerned. Most of the Shaiva and Shakta Tantras are very old and (as is supported by scholars like Dr. S. B. Dasgupta and others) a perennial source of different religions of this holy land. It would, therefore, be simply absurd to try to follow Charya-Songs without keeping these two Tantras in view.

After prosecuting a comparative study of both the Tantras (the Buddhist and the Shaiva or Shakta Tantras) it would be quite easy to understand the definitions involved in the terminology of the Samskrit commentary. And it would be clear to us that 'शून्यता' or 'आलोक-दृष्टि' of Buddhists is nothing else than Vimarsha-Shakti or Ahanta-Paramarsha-Shakti of Shaivites, Karuna represents Shiva-Tattva symbolically (also cf. शिवशक्तिसमायोगात् जायते चाद्भुतं सुखम् ॥—अद्वयवज्रसंग्रह :) and therefore Bodhichitta in its absolute form, defined to be the one identified state of these two principles, is the same as that of Shakti and Shiva. And as that state of identity is termed as Parama Shiva, it follows that Bodhichitta is equivalent to Parama Shiva of Kashmir-

Shaivism, the Goddess Chandalee is nothing else than Kundalinee of the Shakta Tantra or Yoga and संवृति-बोधि-चित्त or Bodhichitta in Vyavahara-Dasha may be equated to Chitta or Mind rising to Mahasukha-Chakra or Sahasrar after being concentrated on and united with Kundalinee reminding one of the truth 'Atma Chittam' (cf. शिवसूत्र) and so on.

This is what I have done in my thesis 'Bauddha Gāna Me Tāntrik Siddhānta'. In the first chapter I have taken all the technical terms contained in the songs and have explained them according to Shaiva-Shakta Tantras quoting the chapter and verse in each case, comparing them with the corresponding ideas in the Buddhist Tantras as far as available to me. The second chapter deals with the paraphrase of each of the fifty Charya-Songs and is followed by a glossary of almost all the technical terminology used in the songs. This finishes the first part of the work.

The second part of my work is a general and critical study of the Charya-literature. But as all my deductions are based on my own commentary as against the commentary of Munidatta, the first chapter is devoted to a discussion on the authority of that

commentary. The next two chapters respectively present an exploration of truths of the Pala-period (as a Back-ground) and a critical appreciation of the songs. Each chapter is again planned into further subdivisions which will be clear from the contents of the book. This part of my work is attempted to submit a thorough study of the text with different angles of vision—sociopolitical, philosophical and literary. The language-problem is set aside, as that deserves an independent treatment, but the text is so attempted to help the philologists in further executions.

If the world of scholars finds that the obscurity has really been resolved and there is no more any riddle in these songs, the work will really be a successful one and I shall have the satisfaction of having done something really useful in the advancement of knowledge.

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